

THE FIRST JUBILEE

OF

The Baptist Mission

IN THE

TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS.

BEING

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE BAPTIST CHAPEL IN THE
TOWN OF GRAND TURK,

On *SABBATH* Afternoon, September 19, 1886.

BY

THE REV. J. HENRY PUSEY.

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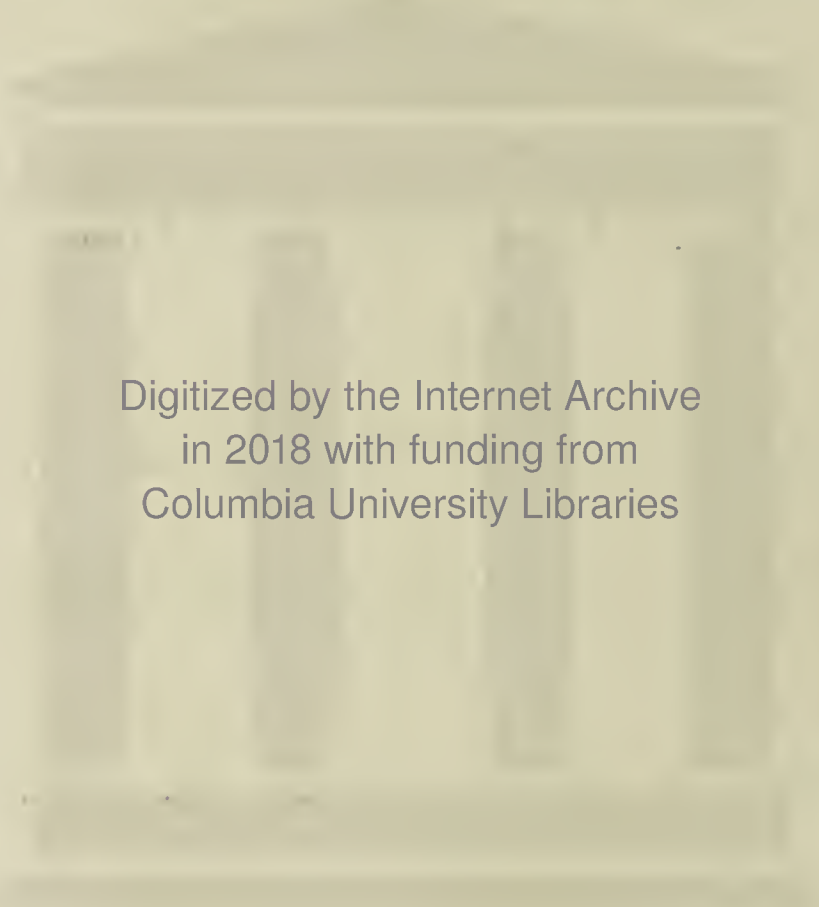
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NOTICES.

The First Jubilee of the Baptist Mission in Turks Islands was celebrated at the Baptist Chapel in the town of *Grand Turk* on Sabbath afternoon (Sept. 19, 1886.) and the two following days.

The FIRST SERVICE was composed chiefly of an address by the pastor, the Rev. J. Henry Pusey to the church, embracing a brief account of the labours of Baptist Missionaries in the Turks and Caicos Islands during the past 50 years. At this meeting the existing members of the Church gathered into *one body* in the centre of the chapel, a large company of friends occupying other parts of the spacious building. At the close of the address the well known hymn commencing :—

“Blow ye the trumpet, blow,” was sung, *con spirito*, by all present. This was a season of rejoicing.

The SECOND SERVICE was designated a “jubilee festival” at which all the members of the Church again gathered into their respective classes and regaled themselves with buns, cakes and tea, provided by each class of members. A season long to be remembered by those who were present, for the pleasures and pastimes of it. At this Festival, N. K. Sawyer, Esqr., U. S. Consul, Mr. R. G. Wint, (Government Schoolmaster,) and the Pastor, delivered appropriate addresses, in which the Deacons of the Church took part.

THE THIRD SERVICE was held on the Sabbath evening following (consequent upon the inclement weather) when the Pastor preached an appropriate sermon founded on 1 Sam. vii. 12. “Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.” The congregation was large and all felt it good to be there. The backsliding members of the Church were cordially invited to attend this series of the Jubilee services, with the prayerful hope that renewed faith in Christ would be the result. God grant it.

THE ADDRESS.

MY DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS:—

It seems to me necessary that I should celebrate with you, your Jubilee in connection with the Baptist Mission in the Turks and Caicos Islands, but especially the organization and work of the Baptist Church of this town from 1836 to 1886. In laying before you a brief account of this Jubilee, an important end may be gained. Serious thoughts of God's forbearance and faithfulness may be awakened amongst you as a church, which I hope may lead to great spiritual results. I may be excused for my inaccuracies either as to dates or facts, as I have not lived so long as fifty years in the world and less than seven years amongst you. Considering also the scantiness of written materials to supply me with the necessary information of the past of this church, caused by the loss of Church Books at sea and in hurricanes—and the long intervals that have existed between the withdrawal of one and the arrival of another of your missionaries—might well account for this deficiency.

In this position, I have had to glean facts where I could in order to shape for you a brief address of this remarkable period of your church's history. And I must confess that some of our aged brethren and sisters have been valuable helps to me by their retentive memories.

In celebrating this Jubilee it might be interesting to glance briefly at the other festivals with which it was connected under the Jewish system. These festivals were held by the Jews at certain periods: The weekly and the monthly festivals—the Passover—the Feast of Pentecost—the Feast of Tabernacles. The Great Day of Atonement (the celebration of which was to make expiation for the sins of the people) Lev. xvi. 11–19. Other feasts too, were instituted in later times connected with the siege of Jerusalem—the capture of the city, the burning of the temple—and the death of Gedaliah.

There were also two other feasts mentioned in Jewish history : the Feast of Purim commemorating the defeat of Haman's plot for the destruction of the Jews, and the Feast of Dedication set forth to celebrate the re-establishment of Divine worship in Jerusalem after Antiochus Epiphanes had been subdued and the temple purified, (B. C. 164.)—The Sabbatic year whose institution was intended to secure rest for the soil, and to teach the people economy and a provident care of futurity. The last and most lengthy period was the year after seven sabbatic years—or the fiftieth year—the Jubilee.

Let us also take a glance at the common benefits that the Jews received at their Jubilee :—

In Leviticus Chap. xxv. 9. we read “ Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land.”

All the servants or slaves then of Hebrew origin obtained their freedom. All the land throughout the country and the houses in the cities of the Levites that were sold during the past fifty years, returned without payment to their former possessors, except such as had been consecrated to God and not redeemed. (Lev. xxv. 10.) All sold or mortgaged goods such as houses, lands, &c., returned to their former owners, so that every man had his inheritance.

The fields had their rest. At the Jubilee, there was neither sowing nor reaping—and what grew spontaneously became the common property of the poor, the freed people, and the cattle (Lev. xxv.) By these changes we find that general benefits were bestowed upon all classes of the people. Social relations were preserved ; a barrier set to both the accumulation of property on the one hand, and pauperism on the other. Permanent slavery became impossible and great distinctions of classes were avoided. None were so rich as to be tempted to idleness, or to the distressing of his poorer fellow-men. None were so poor

that they need yield to despair. At the approach of the jubilee (by the blowing of trumpets) the whole Jewish state was re-born, when the rich were relieved of their superfluous wealth and the poor had another chance of acquiring support. Such were the common benefits of the Jubilee.

The Jubilee therefore is an ancient institution. It was instituted by God some 1490 years before the birth of Christ. We do not now exist under the Jewish system, and we are not bound either by law or by any express Scriptural command to celebrate it. Still, we consider it wise and proper to do so. And as a Church you will all agree that it is a season that enforces hearty thanksgiving to God for His tender mercies to us through a period of fifty years. It becomes every one of you to look back and heartily recognise the unfailing kindness of our Heavenly Father over the way he has graciously led you—to halt, pause and erect our thankful memorial to Zion's King, and write upon it :

“ Here we raise our Ebenezer,
Hither by Thy help we're come ;
And we hope by Thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home.”

And striking our harps afresh, we lift up our gospel banner and with renewed faith in the Saviour's promise, (“Lo I am with you alway”)—march on to victory.

Now, in looking back upon the earliest labours of missionaries in connection with this Mission, I have been informed of the names of the Revds. Sharper Morris, Kilner Pearson and — Bond. Men who first visited the field from 1833 to 1835, and laboured amid hot persecutions in the dark days of slavery. Yes Brethren, that monster slavery ! It swayed so dreadful an influence over these Missionaries of the cross, that those who dared to preach the gospel of Christ, did so at the peril of their lives ! Class-houses and shed-rooms were erected in the suburban parts of this town, and every available chance to catch the *leisure hour* of the slaves for the purpose of offering praise to the God of

heaven, was hailed with joy and gladness. Mr. Morris and Mr. Bond no doubt, soon quitted the field, but Mr. Pearson died here and was buried at the northern point of this island.

Thus, you see, the fiery persecution in the days of slavery drove even the relics of one faithful and dear to this mission far away over the "island hills." A few days ago as I was walking through this chapel yard thinking of your address, I picked up the broken pieces of a tomb-stone, and on refitting them I found engraved thereon the following :—

"The Rev. Kilner Pearson a faithful and devoted Baptist Missionary—Born Nov. 10, 1804, Died Dec. 7, 1834. Aged 30 years."

Thus in the bloom and vigour of his youth and in the hottest part of the Church's persecution, died this Missionary soldier! I was told by a sister now present that the Rev. W. K. Rycroft, hereinafter mentioned, had promised to remove Mr. Pearson's bones to the grave-yard, but he also died before the accomplishment of his purpose.

But there had been no formation of a church up to the close of 1835. These missionaries had only been visitors, who pioneered the field, preached the everlasting gospel, and baptized a few slaves.

It was not until 1836 on the arrival of the *First settled Baptist Missionary* the Rev. E. F. Quant, that this Church was actually formed with seventeen members—the names of March Prince and George Armstrong being at the head of the list. I have had the pleasure of sitting with the latter at our Communion Table, but the former had passed into glory before my arrival amongst you. I know the names of these two brethren are very dear to some of you to-day. And I rejoice to see the wife of the latter amongst us. May the devoted lives of these sainted brethren inspire you to more christian activity, "walking in all the commandments of the Lord blameless."

It would appear that in connection with Mr. Quant, there lived for a short time the Rev. Mr. Bond.

A dear sister of the Church informed me that Mr. Bond was the Originator of the Sabbath School, she being an eye-witness. She was so certain of the fact that she quoted to me the passage of Scripture that was read on the occasion in 1836: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John i. 1. So our Jubilee to-day comprises both Church and Sabbath School! Let both departments increasingly give praise and glory to our God.

But Mr. Quant was not only instrumental in the formation of the Church; he also commenced the building of the Chapel. About the month of October 1836 he selected the chapel site—secured legal papers—gathered stones, and side by side with the oldest members of this church (a few of whom are here to-day) commenced the building of this Chapel. The story has often been told me with inspired soul of how our aged brethren and sisters with their missionary leader, on moon-light nights, carried stones on their heads in order to erect the chapel for the church. You did not labour in vain, or spend your strength for naught. The Chapel stands to-day with renewed appearance a lasting monument of your zeal for the Lord's cause. And though many a faithful one is sleeping in the grave-yard, speaks loudly by their works at this Jubilee to-day.

Surely you who are spared to see this season, and younger ones who have been called to join the ranks by the spirit of God, should look back with mingled feelings of joy and thankfulness that you have, under God, commenced, and for many years carried on so noble a work.

But in the building of the Chapel Mr. Quant met with difficulties. In the following year (1837) there arose a great hurricane which rendered so many of the people homeless and poverty-stricken—stripped of their clothing and driven to extreme want! Thus large numbers had to take shelter in this chapel which was then in course of erection. Here they lived for some time, wandering about for food and clothing by day! So crowded was the unfinished building with the people, that

Divine worship had to be suspended and Chapel building stopped. In 1838 Mr. Quant recommenced the work, finished the building and dedicated it to the service of God. After a period of six years, Mr. Quant relinquished his work in 1842.

The SECOND MISSIONARY was the Rev. William Littlewood who immediately succeeded in the work of the Stations and laboured with zeal from 1842 to 1847. Mr. Littlewood then withdrew from this, for the Station at Puerto Plata (San Domingo) while the Rev. W. K. Rycroft the THIRD MISSIONARY, succeeded him here, and laboured with success from 1847 to 1852.

It seemed, upon mutual agreement, that the two veteran Missionaries again changed places. For Mr. Rycroft took charge of the Station at Puerto Plata and Mr. Littlewood resumed his charge here in 1852.

In 1856 Mr. Littlewood was called to labour at Inagua, after a successful Missionary career of 11 years. This necessitated the return of Mr. Rycroft to these Islands in the same year (1856.) The latter re-sumed his charge with much vigour, but was soon called to sustain a heavy blow.

After a period of nine years, during his second charge of these Stations, (1865) his beloved wife, Mrs. Deborah Rycroft was suddenly snatched from his hand to join the spirits of the glorified in Heaven. Mr. Rycroft could not overcome the touch of a Wise and Unerring Hand. He broke right down, and predicted the Church's loss, by his death also. He told you (many of you remembering it to-day) that in six weeks after the burial of his wife would he be buried. So it happened! After the short space of six weeks he was himself summoned to join the spirit of his wife in heaven! That shock was terrible to you. Here lay softly at rest in the Chapel yard, under a single tomb, the relics of these devoted servants of the Lord Jesus Christ! Truly, they "were lovely and pleasant in their lives and in their death they were not divided." (2 Sam. 1. 23.)—they went up higher, leaving you a bereaved church to mourn your

irreparable loss. Mr. Rycroft's charge of these stations and of those in Santo Domingo extended over a period of fifteen years.

The Rev. D. L. D. Ker was the **FOURTH MISSIONARY**. Mr. Ker had been an assistant to his predecessor and so was at hand to take up the mantle of Elijah, while his brother the Rev. S. Ker the **FIFTH MISSIONARY**, contemporaneously laboured at the Caicos Churches. With untiring zeal did the Missionary-brothers carry on the churches of God's grace for a period scarcely over two years, when, (amid troubles oft) both quitted the field in the year 1867.

It was during the Ker-brothers ministry that the hurricane of 1866 visited your little sea-girt-isle, and so gravely distressed the people, involving them in serious losses of life and property and destruction of limb—large numbers having been rendered homeless, poverty stricken, and driven to exteme want!

You have often told me with feelings of terror of this disaster, and of the shrieks and lamentations that pervaded your land! The chapel, in which we now assemble, became, as in 1837, once more the house of refuge and comfort for many a suffering one—large numbers having wandered for food and clothing by day, and taken shelter here at night. Thus the Lord's house afforded the godly and the ungodly a refuge from impending danger!

“This is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes.”

Oh my friends, let this Jubilee be instrumental in bringing you out of nature's darkness into the light of Revelation. Will you seriously consider the mercies of God in Christ and “flee” to His house “from the wrath to come.”

About two years after the withdrawal of the two last Missionaries, and in answer to an urgent appeal from you, the Baptist Missionary Society sent out your **SIXTH MISSIONARY**, the Rev. Isaac Pegg.

Mr. Pegg arrived here in 1869. During his charge of these stations, he laboured at Puerto Plata for a short time and then made a flying visit to England. He scarcely remained amongst

you over two years when he relinquished work. His was a short Missionary career in this land.

Mr. Pegg's removal caused another vacancy in the ministerial agency here. Again you were left without one to feed the flock of God and win souls for Christ. Still you kept together in the service of Christ Jesus under the zealous leadership of our esteemed Deacon—brother Francis Storr. Hand in hand with Brethren Benjamin Williams and Peter Been, Mr. Storr has rendered this Church faithful service. You will not forget them in connection with your first Jubilee. They are here to-day with our two younger brethren, Messrs. Jupiter Lightbourn and Simeon W. Gardiner, to strike our harps afresh for another fifty years of faith and love. Let us hope for these deacons, and for ourselves, strength in proportion to our day to serve zealously in the Kingdom of our Blessed Lord.

The SEVENTH MISSIONARY was the Rev. R. E. Gammon, who arrived here from England in 1875. After having efficiently discharged the duties of his office in connection with these stations, for nearly two years, Mr. Gammon assumed Mission work at Puerto Plata, (San Domingo) where he continues to labour with energy and zeal.

I wish I was in a position to say more of the labours of these Brethren who have preceded me in this *vast mission field*. With no written account before us of their indefatigable labours, we must be content. They have not toiled in vain. Their efforts to carry you on as a church, have been owned and blessed of God; and I am sure you remember them to-day with mingled feelings of joy and thankfulness.

The EIGHTH MISSIONARY is your present Pastor, who arrived amongst you on the 13th of May, 1880. Since then we have been co-workers in the service of our adorable Lord.

I have nothing to say to-day of my own work which has been humbly laid before you. It has fallen to my lot to lead you to the close, and to celebrate with you, this memorable period—

your first Jubilee ! I consider it a great privilege and an honour conferred on me.

If He whom I heartily desire to serve, and whose name I pledge to exalt, condescends to use me as a medium of good to you, my earnest wish will be realized. To Him has been my prayer, "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe." You cannot forget the Revs. E. F. Quant—W. Littlewood—W. K. Ryeroft—D. Ker—S. Ker—Isaac Pegg—R. E. Gammon—and J. Henry Pusey. These names formed the Missionary staff of the first Jubilee of the Baptist Mission in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Where are they ? Two are in heaven : they rest from their labours and their works do follow them. One has retired in the Bahamas from active toil being under the weight of years. One is at Inagua. One in Scotland. One at Puerto Plata (our missionary neighbour) and one is present with you.

Brethren, we cannot hang our harps upon the willows and cease to sing the Lord's song of mercy. We start afresh in our Great Redeemer's Name. How long we shall so continue, is known only to Him who ordereth all things well.

Let us wish these Brethren well, wherever now they are actively employed in the same work, and pray for their success, in the gospel.

I am sure their self-denying labours to carry on these churches over the gloomy hills of conflict and toil, and through the dark valley of sin and shame, have been owned by Him who saith "I know thy works." The spiritual results of their unremitting toil will be told in *that day*. Need we be reminded of the inflexible hand that guides us in this kingdom ? Though the arm of flesh may fail, He is our strength who "is mighty to save." The Saviour of the world absolutely reigns in the kingdom of his providence whose object is to ensure the gradual progress and ultimate universal diffusion of the gospel we profess and preach throughout the world. The church need not fear. The government of the world is laid upon the shoulders of our Blessed

Redeemer. Bearing in his omnipotent hand the sceptre of universal dominion, He can raise those nations which are disposed to aid in the spread of his gospel, to high political power and eminence ; while those who madly resolve to employ their puny arm of rebellion in retarding its progress, he can "dash in pieces like a potter's vessel." He can render the most inveterate enemy the unconscious instrument of accomplishing his will. Yes Brethren, Our "God reigneth, he is clothed with majesty ; the Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself." It becomes me at this period of the church's history to remind you of these things.

The church is still in the wilderness.

"No slacker grows the fight,
No feebler is the foe.....
'Twas tribulation ages since
'Tis tribulation still."

Her warfare is not yet accomplished. She only halts on the journey in order to erect her thankful memorial to Almighty God.

"Thus onward still we press
Through evil and through good...
...Still faithful to our God
And to our Captain true
We follow where He leads the way
The kingdom in our view."

But while the Jubilee is a season of glad some thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father, and commemorative of His never failing kindness and gracious regard to the church, we are also called upon to remember with deep indebtedness, those who have been made God's blessed instruments on the church's behalf.

There are those who have incessantly aided the church through the remarkable period we now celebrate. The Jubilee calls for this. I refer to the Baptist Missionary Society.

The eight Missionaries in succession from Mr. Quant could only have been kept in the field by the support of our Committee.

Our chapels too, which have stood the test of *time* and *storm* have been chiefly built and sustained by their votes.

Small local helps we do not forget. But what could have been done by them for the effectual carrying on of these Churches to this time.

The depressed state of trade is uniform; the annual cries of poverty by the people to the Government of Turk's Island, are unceasing: the prospects of absolute local independence among you as a church are dim and distant. Still you need not despair. By steady work and unabated interest in our Lord's cause, the time may soon come when a growth of local independence will be matured to relieve the Baptist Missionary Society of their much-loved work—their unabated interest in this part of their vast Mission Field.

Until then, let our Committee take courage in holding out to us the helping hand for the effectual working of the churches of God's grace, in this poverty-stricken land.

“With *love* and *patience*,
With *faith* and *hope*,”
Let them hold, hold the ropes.

You are often reminded of the deepening and widening interest in the work of the Society, sustaining large numbers of Missionaries, churches, colleges, and schools &c., in India, Ceylon, China, Japan, the West Indies, West and Central Africa, and Europe.

Pray ye that God would largely increase the staff of labourers and cause the supporters of our dear Mission throughout the world to feel the force of the Scripture:—God loveth a cheerful giver. (2 Cor. ix. 7.)

The Jubilee, under God, deeply acknowledges the unfailing comfort and help in many a dark and struggling year, rendered to the churches, by the Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society.

